

Message Text

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PAGE 01 JERUSA 02247 141030Z
ACTION SS-25

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S E C R E T JERUSALEM 2247

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PBOR, MARR, UNSC, IS, LE, XF
SUBJECT: AUGUST 13 MEETING WITH ERSKINE

REF: (A) TEL AVIV 10332, (B) STATE 204807, (C)
JERUSALEM 2244, (D) BEIRUT 4676

1. MET WITH ERSKINE IN JERUSALEM AFTERNOON AUGUST 13.
AS AGREED WITH AMBASSADOR LEWIS, I FILLED HIM IN ON
LEWIS/WEIZMAN/EITAN MEEGING OF AUGUST 11. I CONCENTRATED
ON IMILTARY ASPECTS, TOUCHED LIGHTLY ON POLITICAL ISSUES
AND OMITTED DISCUSSION OF POSSIBLE WEIZMAN/ERSKINE GET-
TOGETHER.

2. IN RESPONSE TO MY OBSERVATION THAT WE NOW HAVE A CLEAR
AND AUTHORATIATIVE STATEMENT OF GOI POLICY, ERSKINE SAID
"DO YOU BELIEVE WEIZMAN CAN CONTROL BEN GAL?"

3. IT DEVELOPED THAT BEFORE OR AFTER ONE OF HIS MEETINGS
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WITH EITAN AND OTHER IDF OFFICERS, BE GAL HAD TAKEN
ERSKIE ASIDE AND HAD STRONGLY URGED EFFORT TO SEND LAF
BATTALION TO BIBNIN BE CALLED OFF. I SAID REGARDLESS
OF PERSONAL VIEWS OF INDIVIDUAL OFFICERS, IDF WAS A
DISCIPLINED ORGANIZATION SUBJECT TO POLITICAL CONTROL
AND THAT WE CONSIDERED WEIZMAN'S STATEMENTS TO AMBASSADOR
LEWIS TO BE GOI POLICY WHICH WE EXPECTED TO BE REFLECTED

IN ACTIONS OF IDF IN THE FIELD.

4. ERSKINE SAID HE WOULD SEEK EARLY MEETING WITH BEN GAL AND WOULD SEE WHETHER THE LATTER REFLECTED SAME POSITION AS HIS MINISTER. I EXPRESSED CONFIDENCE THIS WOULD BE THE CASE.

5. AFTER DISCUSSING ALTERNATIVES OF MOVEMENT BY ROAD OR HELICOPTER, BOTH OF WHICH ERSKINE CONSIDERED TO BE FEASIBLE, HE DISPLAYED NERVOUSNESS AT PROSPECT OF LEBANESE BATTALION AT TIBNIN. "WE WILL FACE SAME PROBLEMS AT TIBNIN THAT WE NOW FACE AT KAWKABA," ERSKINE SAID.

6. I POINTED OUT LAF AND HADDAD WERE NOW EYEBALL TO EYEBALL OVER ISSUE OF TRANSITING CHRISTIAN ENCLAVES. DURING CONFRONTATION, CHRISTIANS HAD FIRED ON LAF. THIS SITUATION WOULD NOT OBTAIN AT TIBNIN UNDER EITHER OF ALTERNATIVES ABLASSADOR LEWIS DISCUSSED WITH WEIZMAN. NO ONE COULD BE CERTAIN SHIDIAK OR ZAATER WOULD NOT LAUNCH UNPROVOKED ARTILLERY ATTACK ON LAF AND UNIFIL AT TIBNIN. HOWEVER, IF THIS OCCURRED, I THOUGHT POWERFUL CONSTRAINTS WOULD IMMEDIATELY BE BROUGHT INTO PLAY. IN ADDITION, TIBNIN WAS BEYOND MORTAR RANGE OF MILITIAS.

7. ERSKINE THEN CONFIDED HE HAD PROPOSED TO KHOURY (JERUSALEM 2244) THAT BATTALION DEPLOY TO ALTERNATE SITES
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NORTH OF TIBNIN AND KHOURY HAD INDICATED THERE NO SPECIAL REQUIREMENT TO GO TO TIBNIN PROPER AS LONG AS LAF HAD A PRESENCE IN UNIFIL AREA OF OPERATIONS.

8. ERSKINE CONFIRMED THAT THERE WAS NO PROBLEM IN USING UN HELICOPTERS IF GOL DESIRED. HE THOUGH SAFE FLIGHT PATTERN COULD BE WORKED OUT AS LONG AS HADDAD COMMITTED HIMSELF NOT TO INTERFERE WITH KAWKABA DN OF THE OPERATION. ERSKINE ESTIMATED COMPANY COULDBE LIFTED IN ONE DAY.

9. AS FOR REPORTED DEPARTURE OF SOME LAF ELEMENTS, ERSKINE CONFIRMED SOME SUPPORT PERSONNEL HAD WITHDRAWN TOWARD THE NORTH. HE MINIMIZED IMPORTANCE OF THIS DEVELOPMENT SAYING 600 LEBANESE TROOPS REMAINED IN KAWKABA.

10. ERSKINE HOPES TO MEET WITH AMBASSADOR PARKER IN BEIRUT AUGUST 16.

11. COMMENT: PART OF GOL'S RELUCTANCE TO ACCORD CREDENCE TO STATEMENTS BY WEIZMAN AND OTHER ISRAELI LEADERS ON SOUTH LEBANON MAY IN PART STEM FROM DISCUSSIONS THEY HAVE HAD WITH ERSKINE, AIME AND OTHERS. IT WOULD APPEAR THAT BEN GAL

AND PERHAPS SOME OF HIS SUBORDINATES HAVE ENGAGED IN A
CERTAIN AMOUNT OF FREE WHEELING. GIVEN CLEAR POSITION
ENUNCIATED BY WEIZMAN AUGUST 11, I ASSUME BEN GAL WILL
FAITHFULLY REFLECT GOI POLICY WHEN HE
MEETS WITH ERSKINE. I WILL
TAKE SIMILAR TACK WITH AIME ON RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN IDF
AND MINISTERS WHEN NEXT I SEE HIM. (AMBASSADOR LEWIS HAS
A POINT CONCERNING AIME'S VIEWS ABOUT THE WORKINGS OF GOI,

MENTIONED IN PARA FOUR TEL AVIV 10339.)

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